SIMAULT AND THE MASTER

A VISUAL COMPANION

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MAMMO PRESS

A VISUAL COMPANION

Simault and the Brush Strokes of Eternity

Simault arrived at the monastery gate carrying the echo of a shattering awakening beneath an ancient oak that had dissolved his identity as a merchant's son. He was exhausted from the long journey yet gripped by fear that the experience had been nothing more than madness or illusion, leaving him caught between his old life and an unknown path.

The Master instructed him to paint his fear as a jagged, broken line upon rice paper, then to paint the boundless stillness he had known under the oak as a single encompassing circle. She added a small dot at the center and revealed that he had always stood in the timeless awareness that holds both the division of fear and the wholeness that contains it, within one unbroken breath.

The teaching was this: you are not the fear that divides you, nor the wholeness you long for. You are the awareness in which both appear.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Garden of Infinite Questions

Simault entered the Garden of Infinite Questions expecting spiritual instruction to arrive through profound teachings, hidden knowledge, or some extraordinary revelation. Instead, the Master sent him to the kitchens. There, beneath Sister Moon's uncompromising supervision, he was given mud-covered vegetables to wash and an ordinary clay pot to clean. Simault resisted because the work seemed too simple, too physical, and too far beneath the spiritual transformation he believed he had come to seek.

His difficulty was not the labor itself, but the demand that the moment become something more than it was. He tried to uncover the sacred meaning of a carrot, to turn washing into meditation, and to perform each task in a way that proved his spiritual seriousness. Yet every attempt carried him further from the direct experience before him. Only when he stopped interpreting, striving, and searching for significance did the work become clear: cold water moved across his hands, dirt loosened from the roots, and the pot needed washing. Nothing was hidden. The ordinary task was complete when it was met without resistance or embellishment.

The Garden of Infinite Questions teaches that wisdom is not confined to temples, scriptures, or exalted states of mind. It is revealed through complete attention to what is immediately present. Questions become burdens when the mind uses them to escape the simplicity of experience, but they become doorways when they return attention to what is actually happening. The sacred is not concealed behind ordinary life. It is ordinary life, encountered without distraction, judgment, or the demand that it become something else.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Seven Echoes

Simault entered the Hall of Seven Echoes expecting to offer a teaching but found himself exposed by the demand for absolute honesty. The hall was said to return a true statement seven times, each echo clearer than the last, while words shaped by vanity, fear, or performance died after a single hollow sound. Standing before monks, pilgrims, and a demanding merchant, Simault searched desperately for something wise to say. Every prepared identity, teacher, seeker, humble novice, spiritual student, felt false beneath the hall's listening silence.

Only when he stopped trying to appear wise did truth emerge. He admitted that he knew nothing worth teaching. The words echoed seven times because they contained no performance. From that honesty, a deeper understanding unfolded. The carrot does not strive to become a lotus. The radish does not compare itself to anything else. Life does not require a separate self to control its unfolding. Simault saw that much of his suffering came from trying to become someone, an enlightened seeker, a worthy student, a person with answers, rather than meeting experience as it was.

The Seven Echoes teaches that truth gains its power from sincerity, not grandeur. Words spoken to impress, dominate, or protect an identity have little resonance because they arise from separation. Words rooted in direct experience carry farther because they contain no division between speaker, teaching, and moment. Wisdom begins when the performance of knowing falls silent. What remains is not emptiness in the sense of lack, but the open awareness in which life moves freely, without pretense and without a separate self claiming ownership of it.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Mirror of What Is

Simault entered the Cave of the Unblinking Eye burdened by doubt. He feared that his awakening beneath the oak, his journey to the monastery, and every insight that followed might be nothing more than elaborate self-deception. The Master directed him to stand before the Mirror of What Is, a dark, polished surface that offered no flattering image and no comforting answer. It revealed only what was present: fear, uncertainty, tension, and the relentless voice that judged him for having them. With the mirror, you either meet the Truth or you meet your Lies.

The Master asked a simple question: what is aware of the doubt? Simault saw that fear, thought, and self-condemnation were all experiences appearing within awareness. They could be observed and therefore could not be the observer itself. Doubt was not proof that he had failed or wandered from the path. It was only another passing movement within the same silent awareness that perceived confidence and confusion alike. The reflection might show a saint, a fool, a frightened child, or a determined seeker, but the awareness receiving every reflection remained unchanged.

The Mirror of What Is teaches that liberation does not require the destruction of fear or the perfection of the self. It begins by recognizing that every thought, emotion, and identity is something seen, while awareness itself is never wounded by what appears within it. Storms may gather and pass, but the sky is not damaged by the weather. In the same way, doubt may obscure clarity without altering the silent presence in which both doubt and clarity arise. Freedom is not found by creating a better reflection, but by recognizing that one is the awareness in which every reflection appears.

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*Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Garden of Ceasing

Simault entered the Garden of Ceasing carrying offering bowls and the greater burden of his own relentless effort. He had begun to recognize awareness beneath thought, yet he still treated spiritual understanding as something that had to be maintained, perfected, and proven. Even the search for stillness became another task to perform correctly. When the Master observed that he was still trying, even at the art of not trying, the strain of holding everything together became impossible. His arms opened, the bowls fell, and one shattered upon the stones.

Simault initially saw the broken bowl as evidence of failure. He expected correction, disappointment, or punishment. Instead, the Master welcomed the moment because the breaking revealed what his striving had concealed. When he could no longer sustain the identity of the diligent seeker, the worthy student, or the spiritually progressing novice, nothing essential was lost. The garden remained. The Master remained. Breath, sound, mist, tea, and awareness remained. Peace did not arrive as a reward for surrender. It had been present beneath the effort all along, obscured only by his determination to become someone capable of attaining it.

The Garden of Ceasing teaches that stillness cannot be produced through greater effort because the one striving to reach it is itself part of the disturbance. Ceasing is not another technique, achievement, or spiritual state to possess. It is the falling away of the strain to control experience, perfect the self, and force life toward an imagined destination. Like the untended garden, which makes no effort to become beautiful, life unfolds without requiring a separate self to direct it. Freedom appears when the grasping hand opens, the performance ends, and what has always been present is allowed to remain exactly as it is.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Broken Gate

Simault found the eastern gate of the Monastery of Clear Seeing shattered across the frost-covered ground. Merchant Chen, a respected businessman, had arranged the destruction while condemning the monastery as a threat to tradition. Yet his anger concealed a deeper grief. Floods, war, and taxation had damaged the family legacy he believed would endure. Unable to accept that loss, he struck at the gate as though breaking it could restore the world he had known. Simault recognized the same fear within himself. He too had sought permanence, only to watch his identities and certainties fall apart.

The Master directed them to the exposed cypress beneath the damage. The gate's form had broken, but the wood remained what it was. Its grain, strength, and history were still present. In the Hall of Silent Stones, she showed them that fortunes, institutions, relationships, and identities may change, while the awareness witnessing those changes remains untouched. Chen's anger softened when he recognized that he had been resisting grief. His choice to help repair the gate transformed destruction into responsibility and renewal.

What appeared to be ruin became revelation. The broken gate exposed the difference between what can be damaged and what cannot. Forms may splinter and certainty may collapse, but awareness remains whole. Healing does not require restoring the past exactly as it was or hiding the fracture. It begins when grief is faced, anger is understood, and repair honors what the breaking revealed. What changes can be mourned and mended. What is essential was never broken.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Seeker's Mirror

The nobleman sought the highest spiritual prize he could possess perfect, unshakable samadhi. He wanted complete freedom from suffering, fear, doubt, and the restless hunger of the self. He approached enlightenment as something grand to be acquired through status, study, and dramatic effort, another rare commodity to add to his collection of achievements.

The Master's instruction was deceptively simple: polish the old, tarnished mirror until it could reflect clearly. Through this humble act she revealed that the mirror was his own mind, clouded by striving and grasping, even the grasping for enlightenment. The deeper teaching was not in achieving a spotless reflection, but in recognizing what remains untouched whether the mirror is dull or shining: the silent awareness that sees both the tarnish and the clarity. In the end she showed him that the one who seeks and the awareness that watches the seeking have never been separate.

Simault, a son of a Merchant himself, initially judged the man for his ostentatious grasping. After the Master's instruction, however, he realized what he initially disliked about the man was the same qualities he feared he still possessed. By realizing there is no difference between the Seeker and what is Sought, he realized that they shared the same awareness inherent in all life.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Mountain Path

Simault followed the Master to a place where two paths divided across the mountainside. One wound gradually upward, broad enough for merchants, pilgrims, and heavily laden carts. The other climbed steeply toward the summit, direct but dangerous. Simault assumed the gentler path belonged to caution and the steeper one to urgency, and that wisdom meant choosing correctly between them. Yet the Master showed him that both paths reached the same height. Each served a different traveler, a different burden, and a different moment.

His difficulty was not the path itself, but the belief that one route must be more truthful, more courageous, or more spiritual than another. He judged the slow traveler as hesitant and the swift traveler as reckless, just as he judged his own progress by imagined standards of success and failure. When the Master asked where he stood before any story about destination or advancement arose, Simault finally saw that he was already upon the mountain. The summit was not withholding itself until he became worthy. The same mountain held every path, every pace, every misstep, and every traveler.

What had seemed like a choice between opposing ways became a recognition of belonging. Life does not demand that every person travel by the same route or arrive according to the same measure. Progress becomes a burden when it is used to compare, condemn, or escape the present. The path may wind or climb sharply, but neither carries anyone outside the wholeness already beneath their feet. The destination is not separate from the ground being crossed. Wherever the journey appears to lead, the mountain is already here.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Unbroken Vase

Simault entered the monastery workshop troubled by the belief that his spiritual failures had left him permanently flawed. There he met Master Sagar, an elderly artisan surrounded by vessels shaped through years of fire, pressure, and patient labor. Among them stood a vase marked by a long, unmistakable crack. Simault assumed it was damaged and expected the craftsman to repair or discard it. Instead, the vase was treated with reverence. Its fracture had not erased its form or usefulness. It had become part of the vessel's history, revealing what the clay had endured without making it less complete.

Simault recognized that he had approached himself as a broken object requiring correction. Every doubt, failure, and return of fear became evidence that his earlier insights had been lost. Even when he briefly experienced stillness, he immediately tried to preserve, perfect, and possess it. In the Hall of Silent Waters, the Master showed him that the disturbance was never separate from the stillness beneath it. Ripples moved across the pool and vanished, while the water remained unchanged. In the same way, the crack belonged to the vase without destroying the wholeness that contained it.

What Simault had called imperfection became evidence of life fully endured. Wholeness did not depend upon remaining untouched, avoiding mistakes, or sustaining a flawless state of awareness. A life can carry scars, grief, contradiction, and uncertainty without becoming incomplete. The fracture is real, but so is the vessel that holds it. Freedom begins when the effort to become unbroken falls away and what is already whole – and what can never be broken - is finally recognized.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Flames of Fear

Simault entered the Hall of Living Flame troubled by what was unfolding in the valley. The King, fearful of disorder and determined to preserve his authority, had encouraged suspicion toward strangers and those whose customs or origins set them apart. His warnings spread quickly, giving frightened villagers someone to blame for hardships they could not control. Doors were barred, travelers were turned away, and neighbors began regarding one another as threats. Simault feared for those most exposed to this growing hostility, but he also feared that the same suspicion might take root within him and destroy the peace he had struggled to find.

The Master showed him that fear was not itself the enemy. Like fire, it was a natural energy that called attention to danger. What made it destructive was the oil poured upon it through imagined catastrophes, repeated wounds, and fearful claims accepted without clear seeing. The more Simault resisted his thoughts or surrendered to them, the more fiercely they burned. Beside the flames stood a basin of clear water, reflecting the fire without being consumed. In the same way, awareness could hold fear fully without becoming fear. From that stillness, he could distinguish an actual danger from the stories used to enlarge it.

What had seemed like a choice between fear and peace became a lesson in clear action. Peace did not require Simault to withdraw from the suffering below or remain passive while others were threatened. It allowed him to respond without hatred, panic, or the need to create another enemy. Fear could warn him that something required attention, but it did not need to govern what followed. Grounded in awareness, he could protect, speak, assist, and oppose harm without feeding the same fire he sought to contain. The flames might still rise, but they no longer had to determine who he became.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Language of Trees

Drawn repeatedly toward the Chamber of Living Wood, Simault entered a sanctuary built around seven ancient cedar trees whose roots had been allowed to grow through the monastery itself. The temple's founders had chosen not to cut the trees down or force them into a human design. Instead, the stone halls curved around them, allowing human intention and the living earth to exist together. Beneath Driksha Mata, the great Mother Tree, Simault began chanting the Heart Sutra. At first, his mind continued its usual resistance, questioning the teachings and attempting to understand emptiness through thought. Yet as the words dissolved into the rustling canopy, shifting sunlight, and quiet rhythm of breath, the boundaries between himself and the world began to soften.

The trees did not speak through voices, visions, or secret messages. Their language was presence itself. Simault experienced tree, stone, light, breath, and awareness not as separate things, but as one indivisible movement of life. The Master explained that when the constant story of "me" becomes quiet, the presence animating the trees, the mountain, and the sky is recognized as the same presence looking through human awareness. Nothing supernatural had occurred. Simault had simply stopped imposing names and divisions upon what had always been whole.

Through the Master and the humble gardener Keshava, Simault learned that wisdom does not require complicated teachings, harsh discipline, or extraordinary experiences. It may appear while tending roots, noticing a beetle, feeling sunlight, or listening without demanding that the world explain itself. Nature's language is not translated into words because it is already being spoken through every living form. To hear it, Simault did not need to escape ordinary life. He needed only to become still enough to recognize that he had never been separate from it.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***

Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Lantern of Truth

At dusk, still unsettled by the boundaries that had dissolved beneath Vriksha Mata, the Mother Tree, Simault carried his small brass lantern through the climbing courts of the monastery toward the Hall of Ten Thousand Lights. The lantern had been a gift from the Master during his first few days at the Temple of Clear Seeing, and Simault had come to regard its flame as a symbol of the understanding he must preserve against darkness. Inside the hall, thousands of crystals gathered the fading sunset into rivers of gold, violet, red, and blue. Yet surrounded by such magnificence, his own flame appeared fragile and insignificant. He feared that his wisdom was equally small, and that without constant vigilance both light and self might be swallowed by the night.

The Master extinguished the lantern. Darkness rushed through the hall, awakening Simault's oldest terror of being lost and alone. Only when his panic began to exhaust itself did another light emerge: the ancient radiance of the stars, previously hidden by the lantern's nearer flame. Their quiet brilliance moved through the crystals in patterns more subtle and expansive than anything his lamp had produced. The Master explained that the separate self resembles a flame desperately protecting its own existence, unaware that it has always appeared within a greater illumination. Fear, identity, hope, and understanding may flicker or disappear, yet the awareness that perceives them is never extinguished.

Simault could not receive this truth as immediate comfort. Without his lantern, the boundless openness the Master described felt less like freedom than dissolution. He missed the familiar flame and the reassuring story of a self who could carry, guard, and control it. The lesson did not end with triumph, but with Simault standing exposed beneath the stars, unable to reconstruct the certainty that had been taken from him. Truth had not given him another light to possess. It had revealed that even his need for light arose within something immeasurably larger, something he had not yet learned to trust. Yet as he remained beneath the open sky, the darkness no longer seemed entirely empty. Somewhere within his fear, the first quiet possibility arose that he did not need to understand the greater light in order to be held by it.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Burden of Forgiveness

Still shaken by the extinguishing of his lantern and the vastness revealed beneath the stars, Simault entered the monastery infirmary and confronted suffering more immediate than his own. Refugees filled the makeshift beds after the King's forces burned villages, murdered those who resisted, and punished communities for teaching children to read. This was not disorder but deliberate tyranny, designed to preserve power through fear and the destruction of knowledge. Among the wounded moved Sera, whose father had been killed before her eyes-only weeks earlier. Yet she tended each patient with extraordinary steadiness, refusing to let hatred become another weapon in the King's hands. When she spoke of forgiveness, Simault recoiled. It felt like a betrayal of her father and of everyone harmed beneath the King's rule.

The Master led Simault through the Garden of Silent Voices and into the Hall of Reconciliation, where clear water received every disturbance without remaining permanently distorted by it. She explained that forgiveness does not excuse cruelty, erase responsibility, or require silence in the face of oppression. Simault's anger showed that his heart still recognized injustice. But hatred could bind him to the tyrant as surely as fear, allowing the King's violence to continue shaping his inner life. True strength meant opposing cruelty without reproducing its spirit, protecting the vulnerable without surrendering to vengeance, and preserving the human dignity tyranny tries to erase.

Sera embodied that strength. While tending the wounded, she also gathered orphaned children and continued teaching them to read, preserving the wisdom the King had tried to destroy. Her forgiveness was not passivity. It was resistance disciplined by compassion. Simault was not yet ready to forgive, nor could he imagine releasing hatred without abandoning the dead. But a harder path had opened: he could resist the King fiercely, defend those in danger, and honor every life taken without allowing the tyrant to determine what his own heart would become. Forgiveness was not forgetting the darkness. It was refusing to let the darkness extinguish the light within him.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Still Water

After witnessing children and villagers wounded by the King's violent campaign of fear, Simault entered the Hall of Living Flame carrying grief, fury, and a growing determination to resist. Yet the same anger that sharpened his sense of justice also threatened to consume him. The Master showed him a burning sandalwood stick and explained that fear, like flame, depends upon fuel. Thoughts repeatedly believed, wounds endlessly revisited, and imagined catastrophes all become oil poured upon the fire. The more Simault struggled against his fear or surrendered his identity to it, the more fiercely it seemed to burn.

The Master lowered the flame into a basin of clear mountain water. It vanished with a hiss, while the water briefly rippled and returned to stillness. She explained that fear may feel all-consuming, but it remains conditional, dependent upon the stories that sustain it. Awareness is different. Like the water, it can receive fear, grief, anger, and uncertainty without being permanently altered by them. Simault did not need to destroy every painful thought. He needed to recognize that no passing flame, however intense, could become the whole of what he was.

This understanding did not erase the King's tyranny or release Simault from the responsibility to act. It gave him a steadier place from which to resist it. He could not extinguish another person's fear, but he could meet suffering with attention rather than panic, compassion rather than hatred, and action unclouded by imagined catastrophe. Kneeling before the ancestral fires, Simault watched their reflections move across the still water without disturbing its depths.

The fire still burned within and around him, but he was no longer trapped inside it. He was beginning to know himself as the water: vast, reflective, and capable of meeting every flame without being consumed.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Farthest Flower

After learning that stillness could hold fear without being consumed by it, Simault entered the Moss Garden carrying a new and unsettling openness. There, without reason or proof, he found himself thinking of a solitary flower blooming on some impossibly distant world, unseen by any human eye. No one would ever admire its colors, breathe its fragrance, or know that it had lived, yet Simault felt an inexplicable tenderness for it. Embarrassed by the seeming foolishness of loving something he could never see or reach, he confessed the thought to the Master.

She told him that the farthest flower required nothing from him. It did not need his attention, understanding, or witness in order to become fully itself. Yet his spontaneous love for it revealed something immeasurably precious: the heart's natural capacity to extend beyond every border drawn by distance, possession, and self-interest. Love was not a bridge built through effort between two separate things. It was the recognition that the separation had never been complete. The distant flower, the dew resting on a nearby blossom, the stars, the earth, and Simault himself all arose within the same boundless field of life.

The Master placed her white scarf around Simault's shoulders as a reminder of the wholeness he was beginning to recognize, then sent him beyond the cultivated gardens to the Whispering Falls. There he encountered Niran, a former soldier burdened by the suffering he had caused, now kneeling in the mud and tending fragile seedlings. Niran had begun to understand that the earth did not ask what his hands had once held; it responded only to the care they offered now. Simault saw that love could reach across unimaginable space, but also into the ruined places within a human life. Nothing was truly outside its embrace. Even guilt, grief, and the ashes of the past could become nourishment for something living when met with honesty, patience, and care.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the End of Seeking

Simault had come to the mountain monastery believing that truth, peace, and enlightenment were distant realities he could reach through discipline. He abandoned his former life, endured the Master's difficult lessons, and repeatedly glimpsed a deeper awareness beneath his thoughts. Yet every glimpse vanished when he tried to hold it. Exhausted and ashamed of his failure, he finally told the Master that the entire spiritual search seemed like a fool's errand: the harder he pursued truth, the further it receded.

The Master asked whether truth had ever been something separate that could be found. The awareness hearing her words, feeling his exhaustion, and witnessing his confusion was already present before any effort began. Simault had mistaken thoughts and emotions for his deepest identity, like a man watching clouds while overlooking the sky that contained them. In the Sanctuary of Silent Whispers, she asked him to stop seeking for a single breath. His doubts and fears remained, but a quiet space opened around them. He recognized that every experience arose within awareness, while awareness itself remained untouched.

Outside, a white crane landed beside an ancient cypress. It made no effort to become more fully a crane; it simply expressed what it was. Hearing the monastery bell and feeling the sun upon his skin, Simault stopped trying to convert the moment into another lesson. The Master placed an unopened white lotus in his hand, explaining that genuine unfolding occurs naturally when striving ceases. His questions had not vanished, and his doubts would return, but they no longer carried the same authority. The search ended not because Simault had acquired enlightenment, but because he briefly recognized that the awareness he had been seeking was already the ground of every experience. He did not need to chase the light. He had never been separate from it.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Mirage of Mastery

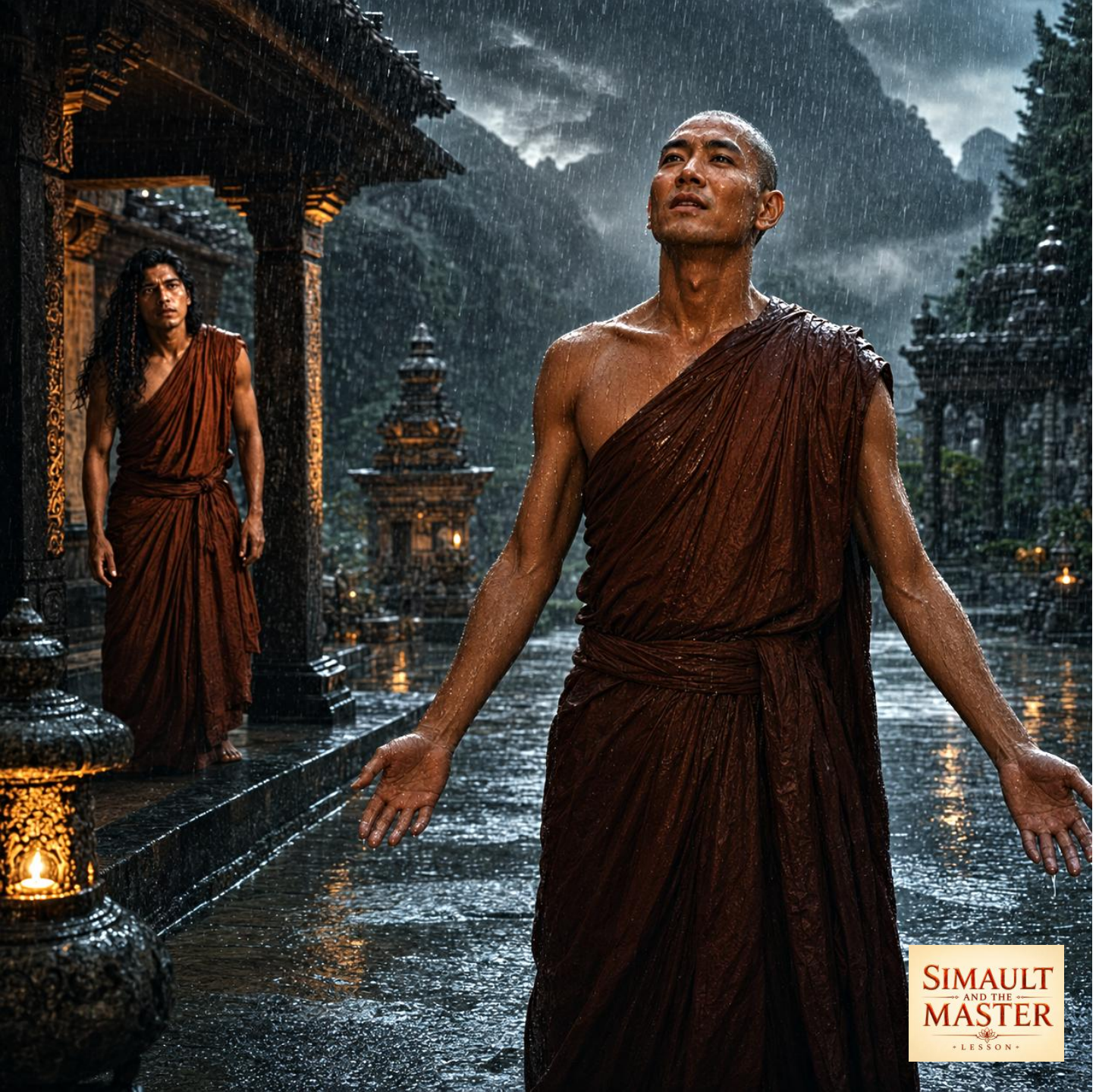
Simault had abandoned the privileged life of a merchant's heir and entered a remote mountain monastery seeking enlightenment under the guidance of an enigmatic Master. Through fear, grief, injustice, and tenderness, he had begun to recognize an awareness deeper than thought. Yet beneath every lesson remained a hidden ambition: he still imagined awakening as flawless wisdom, permanent peace, and freedom from doubt, pain, and human frailty. One morning, he found the Master kneeling in the garden with soil beneath her fingernails, quietly tending a wild violet. Seeing her without ceremony or grandeur, Simault began to suspect that the perfected being he had struggled to become was only another mirage.

The Master led him into the concealed Hall of Endless Mirrors. Each reflection revealed a different fantasy of mastery: Simault as an emotionless sage, an adored teacher, an austere saint, or a heroic figure untouched by suffering. Every image promised escape from vulnerability while concealing spiritual pride. At the hall's deepest point, a plain, weathered mirror showed only a tired young man with muddy feet, disordered hair, tears in his eyes, and the Master's white scarf resting imperfectly around his neck. She told him this was the only honest reflection. Awakening was not the creation of a superior self, but the recognition of truth within his ordinary humanity.

Their lesson was interrupted by Niran, a fellow novice who envied Simault's closeness to the Master and feared he remained unseen and unworthy. Simault recognized the same comparison that had driven his own pursuit of perfection. Rather than claiming greater wisdom, he admitted that no one possessed the path. The Master explained that jealousy, longing, fear, and confusion were not barriers to truth, but wounded parts of human experience asking to be met without judgment.

Simault left understanding that mastery was not a spiritual rank or escape from difficult emotion. It was the courage to meet life honestly without hiding behind an image of who he should become. The white scarf no longer proved that he was chosen. It reminded him that he was already whole. The true path led inward, into the sacred, unpredictable, and gloriously ordinary life already before him.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott



Simault and the Courage to Let Go of Hope

Simault had left the privileged life of a merchant's heir and entered a remote mountain monastery believing that awakening would free him from fear and suffering. Yet after many difficult lessons, he began to see that even hope could become bondage. Beneath a storm-darkened sky, he entered the Hall of Silent Echoes and found Niran, a former soldier and fellow novice, exhausted by the belief that one day he would become peaceful, worthy, and whole. Simault recognized the same bargain within himself: enduring the present because he expected a better future.

The Master joined them with Avani, an elder monk whose quiet service embodied the teaching. She explained that hope often appears virtuous but can secretly reject the life already here. It whispers that peace or completeness will come later, once circumstances change or the self improves. Letting go of hope did not mean surrendering to despair, abandoning responsibility, or ceasing to care. It meant releasing the demand that the future rescue them. Pain could be met directly, work could be done because it was needed, and love could act without requiring a promised outcome.

As rain broke across the mountain, Niran stepped into the downpour and admitted that he remained lost but felt free to be lost without hoping to be found. Simault understood that his hope for an enlightened version of himself had become a heavy cloak concealing the truth of his life. Removing it brought no perfected state, only relief and a willingness to meet what was real.

The storm did not solve their uncertainty. It revealed that life required no promise before it could be lived fully. Courage was not confidence that everything would improve. It was the willingness to open completely to this moment, act with care, and discover that even without guarantees, the life before them was already enough.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Shadow of Shame

Simault, a somewhat rebellious student at the Temple of Clear Seeing, one day accompanied the Master and Niran to a nearby village. There, a healer named Jari asked for help with her young son, Raj, who had withdrawn from everyone after stealing. Raj did not merely regret what he had done. He believed the act had revealed something permanently corrupt within him, making him unworthy of trust, forgiveness, or love. Simault recognized the cruelty of shame: guilt says that a person has done wrong, but shame insists that the person himself is wrong.

The Master led Raj, his mother, Simault, Niran, and several villagers into the Grove of Shadows, where dense branches blocked much of the daylight and tangled roots vanished beneath the earth. She explained that shame grows in secrecy. When hidden and left unspoken, it can spread until darkness appears to be the whole truth. Bringing shame into awareness does not erase consequences or excuse harmful actions. It allows a person to face what happened honestly without reducing an entire life to its worst moment.

Niran then confessed his envy of Simault's closeness to the Master and his fear that he was spiritually inferior. Simault recognized the same wounds of comparison and inadequacy within himself. Rather than condemning Niran, he met him with understanding. Encouraged by their honesty, Raj admitted what he had done. His mother embraced him while making clear that he must accept responsibility and repair the harm he had caused.

Simault understood that compassion and accountability were not opposites. Shame could not heal wrongdoing because it trapped a person inside an identity built from the past. Genuine remorse acknowledged the harm, accepted its consequences, and made a different future possible. The shadow did not need to be denied or destroyed. It needed to be seen clearly enough that it no longer concealed the whole person. As they left the grove, Simault recognized that darkness often revealed the very place where truth, responsibility, and love were waiting to enter.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Weight of the Mountain

Simault was settling into life at the Temple of Clear Seeing when Nael arrived from the passes, exhausted, angry, and suspicious of teachers. Nael had spent years following gurus, enduring harsh practices, and searching for truth. Instead, he had accumulated disappointment. He entered the Pavilion of Echoed Stillness convinced that the Master's scarf, seat, rituals, and surroundings were a performance designed to make seekers surrender their judgment.

The Master did not defend herself. She invited Nael to take her place on the teaching bench and asked what he saw from there. Nael insisted that everyone was playing a role and that the arrangement was hollow. Rather than contradicting him, the Master agreed and asked why he had come. His anger exposed the wound beneath it: he desperately wanted something real, but no longer trusted any teacher, method, or promise.

The Master directed his attention toward the pavilion's still pool and asked him to look beyond the reflected faces and roles toward what did not move. Nael resisted, accused her of repeating familiar riddles, and stormed away. Simault wondered whether the encounter had failed. The Master explained that Nael had arrived carrying a mountain made of teachers, practices, hopes, doubts, and years of striving. Neither she nor Nael needed to carry it forever. His struggle would exhaust itself when he stopped searching for truth outside the present moment.

Watching Nael leave the temple, Simault understood that compassion does not require forcing another person to awaken or taking responsibility for their journey. The weight of the mountain is the burden of ceaseless becoming: the belief that peace, truth, or worth must be reached through one more teacher, achievement, or ordeal. It begins to lift when seeking stops and a person recognizes what is already here, present beneath every doubt, role, departure, and return.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Blade of Stillness

Royal messengers arrive at the Temple of Clear Seeing with an order from King Mahir: Niran must report to the Southern Garrison before the next full moon. Once a soldier, Niran has tried to leave violence behind, and the summons forces him to confront an impossible question. After recognizing the same awareness in himself and others, how can he again raise a sword against another person? Simault is equally shaken. Niran has become his closest companion, and the threat of losing him awakens fear, anger, and loneliness.

Together they race to a seaside cove where the Master sits beneath a banyan tree. Niran offers her his sword, treating it less as a weapon than as the burden of his past. The Master plants the blade upright in wet sand and directs them to its reflection. The sword, water, their faces, war, peace, killer, and slain all move within perception, while the awareness witnessing them remains still and unharmed.

Niran realizes that spiritual understanding does not require withdrawal from action. A blade can deepen the illusion of separation, or serve truth when wielded without hatred, vengeance, or an enemy. The Master does not excuse violence. She tells him to see the fear and ignorance beneath conflict, act only when necessary, and remain anchored in the awareness that no role or deed defines his deepest nature.

Simault must face a different blade: attachment. The Master teaches that love is not destroyed by distance or death because apparent separation is like a wave believing itself apart from the sea. Niran departs for the garrison carrying his sword with responsibility, while Simault lights a candle for him. Stillness is not escape from action, grief, or danger. It is the unmoving clarity from which one may meet them without hatred, illusion, or abandonment of love.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Candle in the Storm (Part 1)

Months pass without word from Niran, and Simault's concern hardens into consuming fear. Meditation offers no refuge. Every silence fills with imagined wounds, every chant feels hollow, and the candle he lights each evening for his absent friend becomes the only ritual that still carries meaning. Simault torments himself with regret, believing he should have prevented Niran from returning to military service or accompanied him into danger.

When troubling reports arrive from the Southern Garrison, uncertainty becomes unbearable. Niran's fate remains unclear, but the possibility that he may be wounded, missing, or trapped beyond the battle lines drives Simault from grief into anger. He confronts the Master and accuses spiritual teachings about acceptance and nonattachment of becoming excuses for passivity. If love is real, he insists, it cannot remain seated safely while another suffers.

The Master neither dismisses his anguish nor offers false reassurance. She allows him to see that his desire to act is bound together with another desire: to control what cannot be controlled. Simault cannot guarantee Niran's survival, erase the danger, or protect himself from grief. Yet neither can he honestly remain at the temple while fear disguises itself as surrender. Recognizing that Simault must follow the truth of his concern, the Master gives him money, provisions, and a sealed temple document to aid his passage. That night, he exchanges his robes for a traveler's cloak and prepares to leave the monastery alone.

At the gate, the candle he has tended for Niran bends beneath the mountain wind but does not go out. Simault understands that love offers no promise of safety and no mastery over consequence. It simply asks whether one will remain present when the storm arrives, and whether one will step forward without pretending to know how the journey will end.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Candle in the Storm (Part 2)

Weeks of travel through the war-torn borderlands leave Simault exhausted, gaunt, and nearly unrecognizable. Guided by scattered reports, he follows the trail of Niran's unit toward the Gorhka Pass, moving through burned villages, ruined shrines, and battlefields where the distinctions between victory and defeat have disappeared beneath the dead.

At last, Simault finds Niran among the fallen, grievously wounded but still alive. Using the Master's money and temple seal, he secures a cart and carries him back across hundreds of punishing miles. To protect Niran from the King's forces, they agree that the soldier he once was died on the battlefield. Hidden inside the temple, Niran slowly recovers under the care of Simault and Sister Moon.

Three months later, the two work together in the garden. Niran tends the marigolds, speaks of planting roses, and vows that his hands will nurture life rather than take it. For a brief afternoon, the violence appears to have released them. Then Niran collapses. An infection concealed within his old wound has spread unseen, and he dies in Simault's arms among the flowers he had restored.

Simault's grief becomes rage. He had crossed the storm, found Niran, brought him home, and believed love and courage had defeated death. Now every teaching about stillness and acceptance seems empty. In the meditation grove, he strikes the trees until his hands bleed and demands an answer from the Master.

She offers no explanation and does not ask him to overcome his sorrow. She weeps with him and tells him that such pain is not a failure of understanding, but the measure of how deeply he loved. As evening settles over the temple, Simault begins to see that Niran's candle was not extinguished when his body failed. Its light remains in the courage that rescued him, the garden he tended, and the love Simault must now learn to carry forward alone.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Red Book of Heaven

Months after Niran's death, Simault sits alone in the temple garden, wrapped in the Master's white robe and surrounded by the marigolds planted where his beloved friend fell. Grief remains his constant companion, quieter than before but present in every breath, every birdsong, and every touch of the flowers that preserve Niran's memory.

Before dawn, Simault notices the legendary Red Book of Heaven resting unguarded in a secluded part of the garden. Its crimson cover bears a golden lotus, and its presence overwhelms him. The book is the most sacred and mysterious scripture in the temple's lineage, surrounded by stories of lost teachings, extraordinary miracles, healing, liberation, and even the restoration of the dead.

That final possibility seizes him. Simault imagines Niran alive again, the warmth returned to his body, his laughter restored, and the terrible moment among the marigolds undone. He wonders whether the book has been placed there for him and whether everything he has endured has led to this single chance.

His hand rises toward the cover, but he stops before touching it. Simault recognizes the desperation within his hope: the need to command reality, reverse what has happened, and make love powerful enough to defeat death. Rather than open the sacred book without permission, he sits beside it and waits.

For hours, longing and memory move through him. He does not deny them, conquer them, or pretend that his grief has ended. He remains present with the temptation, allowing his desire for Niran's return to exist without acting upon it.

When the Master arrives, she finds Simault still seated beside the untouched book. She takes the Red Book of Heaven and leads him deeper into the garden. Beneath the ancient pines, they sit together. There, she opens the book between them and invites Simault to read what is written within it beside her.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Mountaintop

Three years after Niran's death, Simault had learned to carry grief as an enduring form of love. Younger novices now came to him with the questions he once carried. They trusted the stillness they sensed in him, but Simault feared that his words turned living truth into another idea. Wanting to guide without creating new illusions, he asked the Master to accompany him to Kailasa.

Kailasa was the holiest and most formidable of mountains: the axis of the world, sacred as Shiva's place of eternal meditation and as the Buddha's pathless summit of liberation. Pilgrims whispered that a hidden temple stood upon its highest reaches, where those who survived the ascent might receive a final teaching. Simault believed that temple awaited him. He hoped its silence, scripture, or teacher would show him how to carry wisdom back to those who suffered and sought his help.

With the Master and Tashi, he entered a realm of razor winds, frozen ledges, hidden crevasses, and air too thin for thought. The ascent stripped away his questions, his purpose, and finally the identity of the man who believed he had come to teach. Only the next breath, the next handhold, and the next impossible step remained.

At the summit, above an ocean of burning clouds, Simault discovered that there was no temple. No sanctuary had been built there, no scripture preserved, no teacher waiting to reward the climb. There was only an ancient stone altar, the open sky, and a single orange flower rising through a crack beneath his feet. In that emptiness, Simault understood that the mountain itself had been the temple, the ascent the teaching, and every relinquished expectation a doorway. What he carried down was not an answer, but the quiet presence through which truth might recognize itself in another.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Ocean's Heart

Three years after the Red Book of Heaven and the ascent of Kailasa, Simault's grief for Niran had softened into a love expressed through service. He tended the memorial marigolds, guided younger novices, and carried a stillness others trusted. Yet when the Master summoned him to a war-scarred coast to hear the "song of the deep," he felt an immediate pull toward the restless sea. Unlike Kailasa's immense silence, the ocean churned with ceaseless life. Within its violence and movement, Simault sensed the same irrepressible vitality he had loved in Niran.

Accompanied by the Master and Tashi, whose own cousin had been claimed by the sea, Simault entered the darkness in an old rowboat that had survived the war. Bioluminescent plankton burned beneath the oars, dissolving the boundary between water and stars. When dolphins appeared, their calls reverberated through the boat and Simault's body like a forgotten heartbeat. He did not see Niran's ghost within them but recognized the same radiant force that had once moved through his laughter. The Master asked whether Simault was allowing that life to move fully through him - or remaining bound to the form in which he had known it.

Answering without words, Simault plunged into the luminous water. Swimming beside the dolphins, he released the lingering guilt of having been unable to preserve Niran's body. The ocean did not return what had been lost; it revealed that love had never belonged to one form alone.

At dawn they reached a camp of villagers rebuilding from the ruins of war. A soot-covered boy approached carrying a wooden bird carved unmistakably by Niran's hands. Simault gave him the glowing seashell the Master had placed in his own, passing its light forward. As the villagers prepared to begin again, Simault understood that the ocean's heart was not found by holding what must pass, but by allowing its life, joy, and love to continue through every open hand.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Forest's Dream

Simault journeys with the Master and Tashi into an ancient forest inhabited by the People of the Green Silence. His understanding has deepened beyond the need to possess enlightenment, yet a new question remains: how can the truth of boundless awareness be shared without turning it into another doctrine, concept, or object of belief?

Guided by a woman crowned with luminous mushrooms, Simault enters a gathering beside a warm, dark pool at the forest's heart. After drinking from its waters, he experiences the forest not as separate trees and creatures, but as a single living communion. Sap rises through the trunks like blood. Roots and fungi form an unseen network through which nourishment and knowledge pass. Seed, leaf, decay, and renewal become movements within one vast life.

As the People of the Green Silence enact these rhythms through a sacred dance, Simault joins them and recognizes the mountain, the ocean, the forest, and every living being as different expressions of the same indivisible awareness - one dream appearing through countless forms.

Within that living dream, nothing exists alone. Every root, creature, breath, and movement belongs to a greater wholeness, each life sustaining and being sustained by others. Separation is not defeated by an argument - it dissolves through direct participation in the whole.

The Forest's Dream marks Simault's readiness to become a guide. The Master tells him that he now carries the forest's dream and must bring its silent song to those who have forgotten how to listen. His teaching will not depend upon intellectual mastery or spiritual authority. It will arise through presence, shared silence, compassionate service, and the quiet recognition that the truth being sought is already alive within every heart.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and where Mastery Meets the Blade

Simault accompanies the Master, Lonn, and Tashi to the Terrace of Falling Light, carrying warm sesame bread from Sister Moon's kitchen. Lonn, once a feared captain in the King's army, has begun forging plows for farmers and turning his strength toward service. Yet Simault notices that whenever the Master praises him, Lonn answers with a quick, protective grin. Beneath it remains the fear that anyone who sees him clearly will discover only the killer he once was.

When the Master asks him to let the grin fall, Lonn confesses that his hands have taken lives and that no act of service can erase what they have done. Simault recognizes the wound beneath his performance because he once believed that pleasing others and becoming what they expected could keep him safe. He tells Lonn that neither the mask nor the same changes what is already present. The warrior, the craftsman, the breaking, and the mending are all held within the same awareness.

The Master sends Lonn to Sister Moon's kitchen, where the hands trained to command armies must learn to chop turnips and knead bread. Simault later enters carrying fresh herbs and finds Lonn laughing amid the steam, noise, and disorder. Nothing about the kitchen denies his past, but his strength is no longer confined to destruction. The hands that once carried a blade are now preparing food for others, and the man who hid behind a forced grin begins to laugh without protection.

Watching Lonn, Simault understands more clearly what his own path of teaching must become. Awakening cannot be imposed as doctrine or confined to mountaintops and sacred halls. It can be nurtured through honesty, shared labor, humor, patience, and the conditions that allow another person to recognize life within himself. True mastery does not erase the blade or deny the hand that carried it. It transforms what that hand serves now.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Garden of Wild Remedies

Simault descends with the Master to the village's communal remedy garden, where medicinal plants grow in fragrant disorder rather than disciplined rows. Sage, thyme, feverfew, chamomile, and mint crowd together, each offering a different form of healing. Yet Simault arrives carrying an unease no herb can easily address. His growing affection for Sai, the healer's young apprentice, has awakened a warmth and vulnerability that do not fit the protected spiritual identity he has built for himself.

When Simault finds Sai tending the feverfew, their teasing gives way to unmistakable tenderness. A playful chase through the garden ends among crushed mint and tangled leaves, where Simault can no longer treat his feelings as passing curiosity. Sai places a sprig of wild thyme in his hand and asks him to keep it. The gesture is simple, but it exposes the fear beneath Simault's hesitation. He is not frightened because his love is wrong. He is frightened because it is real, because it opens him to desire, uncertainty, loss, and a future he cannot control.

The Master does not condemn the relationship or warn Simault away from it. She asks whether the identity he has formed around spiritual discipline has become another shield against direct experience. Looking across the untamed garden, Simault begins to see that awakening does not require the heart to become less human. Love, longing, joy, fear, and vulnerability are not impurities standing outside awareness. They are movements within the same living wholeness he has encountered in the mountain, the ocean, and the forest.

Sai returns with them to the temple and is drawn into Sister Moon's chaotic kitchen. Working side by side amid steam, vegetables, laughter, and bruised herbs, Simault discovers that love does not pull him away from the path. It brings the path into the body, into relationship, and into the risk of being fully known. The garden's wildest remedy is the freedom to stop protecting himself from his own heart and allow love to become another place where truth is lived.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Tempest of the Heart

A violent storm descends upon the valley, flooding the remedy garden and threatening the village below the Temple of Clear Seeing. As water tears through the earth and fragile homes begin to collapse, Simault is seized by an old terror. He fears that everything he loves will be swept away and that no amount of courage, service, or devotion will ever be enough to prevent loss. Sai finds him in the rain and pulls him into action.

Together they race down the flooded slope, digging trenches, reinforcing damaged walls, rescuing children, and carrying villagers toward higher ground. Each failure of their makeshift defenses deepens Simault's conviction that he cannot do enough. Yet amid the chaos, small acts endure.

A child's basket is recovered from the torrent. A boy is pulled from the current. Sister Moon drags a grieving old man from his collapsing home. No one can stop the storm, but each person does what the moment requires. When a wall nearly crushes Simault, Sai throws him aside and saves his life.

During a brief lull, Simault finally confesses the fear beneath his frantic labor. He is terrified that the flood will destroy the village, Sai, and the love growing between them. Sai takes his face in his hands and tells him to let everything crash. Whatever comes, they will meet it together. Their first kiss arrives in the rain, not as an escape from danger, but as an acceptance of the life trembling within it.

When the storm recedes, the village remains damaged but alive. The Master joins them in the mud and tells Simault to stop bracing for an imagined collapse. The storm, the fear, the kiss, and the wreckage are already held within a wholeness that does not depend upon perfect safety. As villagers begin rebuilding and laughter rises among the battered homes, Simault takes Sai's hand. Nothing has been protected from change, yet this imperfect, frightened, fiercely living moment is enough

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Smoke from the Hearth

In the temple kitchen, Simault works beside Sai and Sister Moon to prepare food for villagers displaced by the storm. The hearth roars, pots boil, onions sting the eyes, and the air fills with smoke, steam, flour, and shouted instructions. Yet the greater heat is within Simault. His love for Sai, once tangled with shame and fear, now moves through him as a fierce vitality he no longer knows how to resist or contain.

When a novice accidentally shatters a jar of precious chilies, Simault does not retreat into blame or self-condemnation. He steadies the frightened boy, scatters thyme across the red dust, and declares the disaster a festive spill. His unexpected humor breaks the tension, and the kitchen erupts in laughter. Sai recognizes the change in him. Simault is no longer trying to stand apart from life's disorder. He has begun to enter it without treating every mistake, desire, or powerful emotion as evidence of failure.

Standing shoulder to shoulder, Simault and Sai stir the great pot of barley stew together. Their hands meet upon the ladle, and Simault admits that he cannot name what is unfolding between them. Sai offers no promise or definition. They will navigate it honestly, together when their paths allow and separately when they must. The fire within Simault has not vanished. It has ceased to be something he fears will consume him. It has become a hearth, capable of warmth, nourishment, and shared life.

They carry the finished food into the battered village, where warm bowls and bread restore more than exhausted bodies. Later, beneath a sky cleared by rain, the Master tells Simault that fire first consumes what is false. Love, anger, desire, tears, and vulnerability need not be purified out of human life. When received without shame, their energy can expose the truth beneath the identities built for protection. Simault sees that he has not wandered from the path by becoming fully alive. Mud-stained, heart-open, and no longer hiding, he has arrived within it.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Weight of the Wet

Morning finds the flooded village buried beneath mist, mud, and exhaustion. Simault kneels in the ruined remedy garden, clawing medicinal roots from the mire as though enough effort might restore everything the storm has damaged. Beneath his urgency lies a deeper fear. He worries that the village will never recover, that his love for Sai will collapse beneath his uncertainty, and that anything he cannot repair will expose him as inadequate.

Sai joins him in the mud and asks who decided the garden must be fixed before life can begin again. Around them, children drum upon salvaged pots, villagers rebuild damaged roofs, and smoke rises from the broken communal oven. Nothing has returned to its former order, yet life continues through every crack. When Sai admits that his own father rejected him for being too gentle and too drawn toward healing, Simault recognizes the same wound they both carry: the belief that softness, difference, and imperfection make a person unworthy of love.

Lonn passes carrying a salvaged beam, bearing what must be carried without pretending he can undo the storm. The Master and Sister Moon soon join them, and the Master sees that Simault is still holding the disaster inside himself. He confesses that he has spent his life patching cracks, terrified that if he cannot make everything whole, he will lose love, purpose, and mercy.

The Master tells him that cracks do not always announce collapse. They may become the places where water gathers, roots deepen, and light enters. Simault does not need to earn wholeness by repairing himself or the world into perfection. Sai's love is not weakness, and their vulnerability is not a failure of spiritual discipline. It is life arriving without protection.
Sister Moon tosses them a mud-stained loaf and reminds them that wet bread still feeds. Simault breaks it in half and shares it with Sai. Surrounded by ruins, laughter, labor, and returning sunlight, he finally feels the imperfect moment as sufficient. Nothing is spotless, yet everything needed for life is already present.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Blade, the Peacock and the Blossoming Heart

In the flood-damaged remedy garden, Simault uncovers an old rusted knife beneath the mud. Sai begins restoring its edge, reminding him that strength does not disappear because it has been neglected or feared. Their quiet intimacy is interrupted by the return of Kai, transformed from an anxious novice into a confident, flamboyant presence whose beauty and restless intensity earn Sai's sharp comparison to a peacock.

The Master places Kai under Simault's guidance. Kai wants the clarity he believes Simault possesses, while Simault fears that he has nothing certain enough to teach. He brings Kai to a waterfall, hoping the elemental power of the place might reproduce one of his own moments of awakening. Instead of offering explanations or techniques, Simault eventually stops trying to create an experience. He sits beside Kai in the thunderous mist and meets his gaze without judgment, expectation, or performance.

Within that sustained silence, Kai's striving briefly loosens. He recognizes in Simault not a teacher guarding a secret, but an open presence capable of holding his longing and confusion without demanding that he become different. The moment passes, yet something in Kai has shifted. Simault understands that he did not give Kai enlightenment. He merely stopped standing between Kai and what was already present within him.
Sai later admits that Kai's experience has awakened uncertainty in him. He wonders whether Simault possesses an inner depth he may never reach. Sister Moon reminds him that love does not depend upon complete understanding and that comparison only clouds what is already true between them.

By evening, Simault sees how the blade, the peacock, and his own heart belong together. Kai's hunger cannot be satisfied by imitation, and Sai's love does not need to compete with another person's awakening. Simault cannot place truth into either man's hands. He can offer presence, honesty, and love, then allow each life to open in its own time. His heart blossoms not by resolving every tension, but by becoming wide enough to hold love, attraction, uncertainty, and responsibility without turning any of them into possession.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Threshold of the Heart

Kai follows Simault through the monastery with a longing that reaches beyond spiritual instruction. He wants the clarity Simault revealed at the waterfall, but he also wants Simault himself. The two desires have become intertwined, each strengthening the other. Simault recognizes what Kai cannot yet say plainly and understands that he cannot answer the romantic hope beneath it. His heart belongs to Sai, and offering Kai an imitation of that love would only deepen the confusion between them.

Yet Simault does not reject Kai or retreat behind the authority of a teacher. He leads him back to the waterfall, knowing there is something genuine he can share with him. Kai is already open to the Master's teachings, already standing near the threshold of direct recognition. Simault cannot give him the relationship he wants, but he can meet him completely within the silence they have both learned to trust.

They sit together beneath the thunder of the falling water. Simault stops trying to instruct, console, or redirect him. He offers Kai his full attention without romance, possession, or distance. Within that intimate stillness, Kai's longing loosens from the form it has taken. For one brief, luminous moment, the seeker and the object of his seeking fall away. What remains is not Simault withholding love, but a shared awareness in which neither man is separate from the other or from the life moving around them.

The moment belongs uniquely to them. Simault could share romantic love with Sai, but only Kai could meet him here, through the particular openness created by Kai's longing and spiritual hunger. When the experience passes, Kai understands that Simault has not given him a substitute for love. He has given him the most honest form of love available between them.

Simault crosses the threshold of the heart by refusing both cruelty and false reciprocity. He does not promise what he cannot give, yet he does not withhold what is true. Love becomes neither possession nor rejection, but the courage to meet another person fully within the reality both hearts can honestly share.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Temple of Unprotected Love

Sai leaves before dawn on a series of ordinary village errands, but Simault senses that something deeper is unfolding. Throughout the day, his thoughts return to the love growing between them and to the fear that accepting it may alter the life he believed he had chosen. Sister Moon finds him wandering the monastery paths and tells him to stop fleeing the shadow of his own heart long enough to see what it wants.

That evening, Simault discovers a small note bearing a sketch of the mountain shrine and two words: come tonight. He climbs the steep path at twilight and finds the secluded temple transformed by hundreds of candles. Sai has prepared a simple meal of bread, olives, vegetables, and mountain wine. Within that private field of light, they speak plainly at last. Sai cannot define what exists between them, but he knows it is real. Simault admits that he feels it too, even as part of him fears love will draw him away from the Master, the temple, and the path he has followed.

Sai asks whether that path has not led him directly here, toward a heart becoming more open rather than less. They remain together beneath the candles until the night grows cold, then descend the mountain hand in hand. The next morning, Simault confesses everything to the Master. He tells her that love has entered his life and that he fears both its beauty and its power to break him. She does not ask him to retreat. She tells him that love is not a narrow road from which he can stray, but the ground beneath every path. It will break the heart because it destroys the walls built to keep life out. Simault sees that safety would preserve only a smaller heart.

When he returns to the courtyard, he no longer needs love to remain unchanged or free from pain. He is ready to walk without protection, allowing his devotion to Sai, the Master, and the world to belong to one expanding heart.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Unquenchable Fire

The village of Stonewillow lies beneath a smoke-darkened sky as news arrives that the King's armies are advancing toward the coast. Simault stands with Sai, Kai, Sister Moon, and Lonn while a traveling merchant describes the familiar pattern of conquest: families divided, villages burned, crops seized, and anyone who refuses the King's order marked for destruction.

For Sai, the threat is personal. His parents and sister still live on the coast, even though they once cast him out for loving as his heart required. The old wound has never erased his bond to them. When Sai admits that he must return if the King's shadow reaches their home, Simault answers without hesitation that he will go with him. Love makes the decision before fear can calculate its cost.

Kai's grief rises as fury. The King destroyed his family, and he swears that he will never kneel or allow another home to be taken. Sister Moon warns him that uncontrolled rage often consumes its bearer before touching the enemy. A lasting flame must be tended, disciplined, and directed. Turning to Sai and Simault, she offers a harder truth. Love does not ask permission before it burns. It makes people helpless, exposes every defense, and calls them toward lives they cannot secure in advance.

At dusk, Simault finds the Master beneath an ancient cedar and confesses that his love may be clouding his judgment. He fears following Sai blindly into danger. The Master does not extinguish that fear or urge detachment. She tells him to let love burn through the self that still demands safety, certainty, and control. Helplessness is not failure when it strips away illusion and reveals what the heart will serve.

When Simault returns to Sai, the choice has become clear. He will not remain protected within the monastery while the man he loves walks toward danger alone. They clasp hands and leave before dawn, stepping together into the wounded world. The unquenchable fire is not rage or reckless sacrifice. It is the love that survives rejection, fear, war, and even death because it no longer belongs to the separate self that tries to possess it.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Moment that does not End

Simault and Sai cross a frozen mountain pass toward the coast, driven by the fear that they may already be too late to reach Sai's family. The path narrows between walls of black stone, and signs of recent violence begin to appear: disturbed gravel, a broken sapling, the metallic scent of blood, and finally the unmistakable sound of steel.

Around the bend, they find one of the King's soldiers standing over a dying farmer. Sai rushes forward without thought, consumed by grief and fury. The soldier turns and raises his blade toward Sai's exposed throat. In that instant, Simault's years of discipline, contemplation, and devotion to nonviolence vanish beneath one overwhelming truth: Sai is about to die. Simault finds a fallen sword and strikes. The movement contains no strategy, anger, or conscious decision. The blade enters the soldier, who collapses upon the stones. Sai lives, but Simault is left standing in another man's blood, unable to reconcile what he has done with the person he believed himself to be.

Hidden beneath an overhang while they listen for approaching soldiers, Simault begins to unravel. Sai tells him that he saved a life and acted when no other choice remained. Simault cannot accept the comfort. What terrifies him is that the violence came without thought, as naturally and immediately as breath. He believed stillness had carried him beyond such darkness, but the act reveals that he contains capacities he never wished to see.
Sai does not abandon him. He asks only that Simault take one step, then another, because they must still reach his family. Simault rises and continues down the mountain, his robes stiffening with blood and the terrible instant repeating within him.

The moment does not end when the soldier falls. It continues in Simault's hands, memory, and shattered identity. Yet even within that horror, Sai remains beside him, and the road still asks to be walked.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Silence of a New Grave

In the narrow mountain defile, the world falls silent around the soldier Simault has killed. Blood covers his hands and robes, and the man he believed himself to be seems to have died beside the body at his feet. Sai first recoils in shock, then crosses the distance between them and takes Simault's bloodied hands in his own. He does not deny what happened. He tells Simault that the soldier would have killed him and that Simault acted to save his life.

With danger still near, they move the body beneath a rocky overhang and cover it with stones. The hurried cairn becomes an unmarked grave in the forgotten pass. Sai hides the sword in a fissure, and together they flee before the soldier's companions can find them. Their earlier journey toward Sai's family has become something darker. Simault carries no physical weapon, yet the act follows him in every step, every sensation, and every silence.

That night, sheltered inside a cave, Simault finally breaks. He calls himself a murderer and believes that every teaching, vow, and moment of stillness has been exposed as a lie. Sai refuses to offer easy absolution, but he will not allow Simault to reduce the whole of his being to the worst moment of his life. The killing was terrible, yet it arose from Simault's desperate refusal to let the man he loved be slaughtered.

Simault cannot reconcile protection with nonviolence, or love with the blood spilled in its name. He admits only that he would make the same choice again if Sai's life were threatened. Sai remains beside him, holding that unbearable truth without turning away.

Nothing is resolved beside the small fire. The grave remains, the soldier remains dead, and Simault's certainty does not return. Yet beneath the horror, a fragile willingness begins to form. He will face what he has done without denying it, and he will not face it alone.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Road Home

Simault continues through the devastated countryside beside Sai, but the road has become a procession through the memory of the man he killed. Blood still stains his robes and seems to cling to his hands even after Sai washes them. Sai guides him over the difficult ground, speaking gently and remaining close, but Simault cannot yet accept his gratitude. He believes the violence has separated him from everything he once understood about harmlessness, spiritual discipline, and love.

On a barren hillside, they encounter a small group of exhausted refugees. Sai suddenly recognizes his parents, Torvin and Nyra, and his younger sister, Thorn. Their reunion erupts in tears and desperate embraces, but the joy changes when they notice Simault's bloodstained clothing. Sai introduces him as the man who saved his life. Suspicion, fear, and gratitude pass across the family until Nyra understands what Simault has done and the cost he now carries.

Rather than condemning him, she embraces him. Held with a mother's tenderness, Simault finally allows his grief to break open. He weeps for the soldier, for the life and future he ended, for the spiritual identity he believes he has destroyed, and for the love that drove him to act. Nyra washes the remaining blood from his face and hands, not erasing the deed, but refusing to let shame make him untouchable.

Sai's family returns with them to the monastery. Thorn protects the group along the dangerous road, while her guarded suspicion gradually becomes respect. At the Temple of Clear Seeing, Sister Moon welcomes the battered travelers and immediately recognizes that Simault has returned carrying more than exhaustion.

The road home does not restore the person Simault was before the killing. It brings him toward those willing to receive him as he is now. After troubled sleep, he rises before dawn and approaches the Master's chambers. When the door opens, her eyes hold no accusation, only complete recognition. Simault steps inside to confess what he has done.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Embrace of Truth

Simault awakens from fractured sleep still trapped inside the mountain pass. The soldier's face returns whenever he closes his eyes, along with the sword in his hand and the knowledge that another life ended through him. Although Sai survived, Simault fears that the killing has exposed something irredeemable within him and severed him from the person he believed himself to be.

The Master receives his confession with unwavering compassion. She tells him that her love has not changed and that she is proud of him - proud of the love that made him protect Sai, the conscience that prevents him from dismissing the life he took, and the courage that brought him home to speak the truth. She sees not only the wounded student before her, but the teacher he is becoming. His suffering has not disqualified him from the path. Properly faced, it may deepen the humility and compassion with which he will one day guide others.

When the memory returns, the Master teaches Simault to recognize it without surrendering the whole present to it. He can feel the terror in his body, name what is happening, and return to the breath beneath it. The past remains, but it does not have to become his entire identity.

In Sister Moon's kitchen, the teaching becomes practical. Simault drinks ginger tea and shells peas while steam, laughter, and the clatter of work surround him. When the soldier's eyes appear again, he feels the pod between his fingers and returns to the living world, one breath and one ordinary action at a time.

That evening, Sai waits near Niran's shrine and opens his arms. Simault enters the embrace carrying grief, guilt, love, and the cost of Sai's survival. He begins to understand that healing does not require him to become innocent again. It asks him to face what happened, remain open to love, and allow the wound to enlarge rather than end his life of service.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Master, Finale pt 1

Years after arriving at the Temple of Clear Seeing as a frightened and disoriented seeker, Simault enters the ancient grove as a teacher. Beside him walks Daen, a young novice whose hunger for understanding recalls Simault's own early restlessness. Simault leads him to the great tree beneath which he once discovered that the living world could be encountered not merely as an object, but as a presence.

He asks Daen to place his hand against the bark and release everything he believes he knows about trees. Daen initially searches for a method, but Simault explains that the mind always demands instructions while the heart simply recognizes. As the boy becomes still, the rough bark beneath his palm begins to feel alive with an ancient, patient rhythm. He senses the roots moving through the earth, the leaves trembling above him, and the same life flowing through his own body.

Simault reads a poem to the tree, offering it not as instruction but as friendship. Daen feels that the tree receives and remembers the words. Unable to explain how he knows, he realizes that some truths are understood before the mind can define them.

Simault tells him that this recognition is the beginning of wisdom. To listen with one's whole being is to discover that the life within the tree also moves through rivers, stones, animals, and people. The world is no longer a collection of separate objects, but a living communion.

In guiding Daen toward this discovery, Simault completes a quiet circle. The bewildered student has become a teacher, not because he possesses every answer, but because he can help another person become still enough to encounter truth directly.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Master, Finale pt. 2

The Master tells Simault that his responsibilities are growing. Young seekers such as Daen will require his guidance, and she has prepared larger chambers for him near her own. The room contains space not only for his work and meditation, but also for Sai, a quiet acknowledgment that the Master recognizes their love as part of Simault's path rather than an obstacle to it.

When she visits him there, she observes that the turmoil within him has begun to settle. Simault admits that discipline and contemplation have helped, but love has been the greater healer. The Master reminds him that he acted to protect Sai and that he must not allow death's shadow to govern the life that remains. Her final instruction is simple: the deepest answer to death is to nourish life deliberately and joyfully.

After she leaves, Simault discovers a small moving sack inside the doorway. Within it are two kittens, one midnight black with luminous green eyes and the other a spirited tabby patterned in brown, white, and black. He lifts them into his hands, astonished by their warmth, fragility, and fierce vitality. Their tiny bodies begin to purr against his palms.

Simault laughs, then weeps. The gift transforms the Master's teaching into something immediate. Life is no longer an abstraction to be defended through philosophy. It is present in two beating hearts that now depend upon his care.

The kittens climb across his lap and explore their new home while the remaining darkness within him loosens. By giving Simault vulnerable lives to nurture, the Master draws him further away from death and toward tenderness. The future teacher must not only understand life. He must feed it, shelter it, delight in it, and allow its uncomplicated joy to restore him.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Master, Finale pt. 3

Simault walks with the Master through the Temple of Clear Seeing, revisiting the places that shaped his transformation. The monastery no longer appears as the strange, austere institution he first entered after kicking its enormous gate in frustration. Its weathered stones, gardens, kitchens, and halls have become the living record of his journey.

They pass the Hall of Seven Echoes, where Simault once stood terrified before monks and pilgrims, desperately searching for something profound to teach. Only when he admitted that he knew nothing worth teaching did the hall return his words seven times. Now he understands that the moment was not a humiliation, but the beginning of authentic speech.

They continue past the Garden of Ceasing, where his burden of striving became too great and the offering bowls fell from his hands. One shattered against the stones, revealing that stillness appeared only when he stopped trying to manufacture it. Near the kitchens, he remembers Sister Moon's relentless instruction through vegetables, bread, dirty pots, and ordinary work. What once seemed beneath him became the ground upon which his spiritual life was built.

As they walk, Simault remembers arriving convinced that wisdom must be distant, hidden, and extraordinary. The Master had met his fear, vanity, grief, love, and confusion without ever withdrawing her faith in him. She had not turned him into someone else. She had helped him become fully present within the life he already possessed.

The monastery now feels alive around them, its corridors carrying the devotion of generations. Simault sees that every lesson, failure, friendship, loss, and moment of tenderness has prepared him to guide others. The student who once demanded answers now walks beside his teacher as a trusted companion, ready to carry the teaching forward.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Simault and the Master, Finale pt. 4

Beyond Stonewillow, the world is becoming increasingly uncertain. Rumors of rebellion move through the valley, local militia patrol the roads, and families prepare for violence that may soon reach them. Yet when Simault arrives at Sai's family home, Sai runs to meet him with unguarded joy.

They embrace with the Temple of Clear Seeing rising above the valley behind them, its curved roofs and ancient walls illuminated by a brilliant sunset. The mountain sky burns with orange, rose, and violet, while the first lights appear in the monastery windows like stars. The temple stands not apart from the threatened world, but within it, a sanctuary whose teachings must now be carried into uncertainty.

Sai speaks of the approaching danger and the impossibility of knowing what tomorrow will bring. Simault does not promise safety. He has learned too much about impermanence to offer false assurances. Instead, he draws Sai closer and reminds him that they possess this moment: the fading light, the earth beneath their feet, the breath moving between them, and the love they have chosen to share.

Their embrace gathers the entire chapter into one image. The tree taught that one life flows through all things. The kittens revealed that death is answered by nurturing what lives. The monastery showed Simault that wisdom is formed through every ordinary joy and devastating loss. Sai embodies the love that allowed those truths to become lived experience.

The revolution may come, kingdoms may fall, and the temple itself may someday change. Yet Simault no longer seeks permanence as protection from life. He has become a teacher by discovering how to remain open within uncertainty. Held in Sai's arms beneath the radiant Temple of Clear Seeing, he recognizes that love, presence, and connection are not escapes from the storm. They are the compass by which it can be entered.

*- Taken from **Simault and the Master***
Author: Jim McDermott

Après

In Sister Moon's kitchen, Simault and Daen work side by side beneath her relentless supervision, exchanging jokes while she criticizes their vegetables, threatens them with her ladle, and proves that life at the Temple of Clear Seeing remains as unruly and affectionate as ever. Their laughter stops when a novice arrives with an extraordinary message: the Master has summoned them both to her private chambers.

Simault and Daen hurry from the kitchen with Sister Moon calling after them. Their playful mood fades as they enter the dark stone corridor outside the Master's door. Simault remembers the last time he was called there, before leaving the temple to rescue Niran, and understands that such a summons is never ordinary. When they enter, the Master receives them according to an honored tradition reserved for moments of profound trust. She reveals the name she carried before she became the Master.

Elarra.

Simault and Daen stare at her, stunned. Simault has known her as teacher, guide, and beloved presence for years, yet hearing her name changes the room around them. For the first time, the title falls away, and the woman beneath it stands before them.

Elarra waits in the dim chamber beside a single lantern. Though composed, she carries an unease Simault has never seen in her before. Two cushions have been prepared. Once the young men are seated, she tells them that time has moved more quickly than expected and that the survival of the village, the monastery, and their people may depend upon what she is about to reveal.
Daen attempts to ease the tension by asking whether she intends to disclose the secret of all things. Elarra does not smile. She tells them that what follows is not a lesson, but a truth she has never spoken to anyone.

Looking directly at Simault, she declares that before they can understand what comes next, they must learn who she truly is.

And then she began to speak.

Coming Soon: *Elarra and the Master*
Author: Jim McDermott